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S E C R E T ABU DHABI 000192

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TAGS: PREL PARM MOPS MASS IR AE

SUBJECT: URGENT UAE REQUEST FOR AIR DEFENSE -- FIVE PATRIOT BATTERIES THIS YEAR

Classified by Ambassador Richard Olson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (S/NF) Summary: UAE Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces convoked the Ambassador to request the urgent deployment of five U.S. patriot batteries in the UAE as an interim measure until the UAE's own batteries are operational (anticipated in 2012). The UAE belief that an increasingly likely pre-emptive Israeli attack on Iran would prompt quick retaliation on U.S. allies (foremost among them the very proximate UAE) prompted the request. End summary.

¶12. (C) On 22 February 2009, Ambassador Richard Olson, Defense Attaché (DATT) Colonel Bret Rider and Chief, US Liaison Office (USLO) Colonel David Sprague were summoned to the office of the Chief of Staff of the UAE Armed Forces (COS), where they were met by the COS, LTG Hamid Thani al Rumaithy, Director Military Intelligence and Security (MISS) MGen Eissa al Mazrouei, Commander of the UAE Air Force and Air Defence (AF&AD) AVM Mohammed Swaidan al Qamzi and the COSS office director BGen Faris Mohammed al Mazroui.

¶13. (S) Following very brief pleasantries the COS bluntly commented: "I need to be open and frank with you, there are changes in the region that concern us." On behalf of his government, the COS then made an official request of the US government to deploy between four and five Patriot batteries to the UAE during calendar year 2009. He requested these batteries remain in place until such time as they can be replaced by the UAE's own nine batteries, currently on order.

¶14. (S/NF) The UAE would place three of the US batteries in and around Abu Dhabi, one battery at the port of Jebel Ali, and a final battery somewhere else in the northern emirates (presumably Dubai). The COS noted previous studies on the placement of the batteries are on file and will help guide final placement. The COS stated the batteries would be used to protect critical military and civilian targets.

¶15. (S/NF) The COS noted that Iran will continue doing its best to keep the entire region unstable. Iran is recognized as Israel's biggest threat in the region and Israel will attack Iran with little or no notice. Following an Israeli attack, the UAE is convinced Iran will lash out against those who "help Israel," or the allies of Israel's friends, most significantly the UAE. The COS noted the UAE has the Patriot system on order and expects to take delivery in 2012.

He went on to mention the pending deployment of a single Patriot battery to protect Al Dhafra Air Base -- which should be operational within the next 30 to 60 days. The COS noted the UAE operational capacity will come too late and the single US battery will be too little to stop Iranian missiles if they attack sooner rather than later.

¶16. (S/NF) Hamid Thani senses indications and warnings the Israeli government now being formed will likely attack Iran. He thinks the new (Netanyahu) government will be very determined to eliminate the threat of Iranian missiles, especially nuclear tipped ones, which they fear may come raining down on Israeli cities. He also stated Israel would be justified to take such action as it must protect its

citizens just as any nation has the duty to do. He feels that a breakthrough in international efforts in regard to Iran's armament programs may slow Israel's actions. However, the COS knows that Israel must maintain all its options. He also knows the Iranians have toyed with the international community for over ten years as they built their capability. He stated the Israelis are also very aware of Iranian tactics.

¶17. (S/NF) When pressed on what type of event may precipitate an Israeli attack, the COS thought the delivery of the Russian S-300 system could be the catalyst. The COS stated very flatly that "I don't trust the Russians, I've never trusted the Russians or the Iranians."

¶18. (S/NF) The COS went on to request continued and expanded intelligence sharing between the US and the UAE. He asked the DATT what advance warning the US could expect of an Iranian attack. He quickly added that he asks the same question of his MISS chief at least twice a week and gets no answer -- as he knows there is no good answer. (Note: The COS served as the MISS chief prior to becoming COS and knows very well the capabilities related to predicting Iranian actions. End note.)

¶19. (C) The meeting ended nearly as quickly as it began with both sides wishing each other good will and great success during the International Defense Exhibition (IDEX) opening later in the day (immediately following this meeting all of the attendees departed directly for IDEX). The COS met with and most certainly briefed the President, Prime Minister and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince (the de facto Minister of Defense) as IDEX began.

OLSON